

**For Immediate Release****21 December 2000****New Internet brokerage offers Austrians superior services**

- **Erste Bank's new internet brokerage covers 18 stock exchanges**
- **Combined with fund supermarket offering over 700 funds**
- **e-finance platform soon available for Austrian savings banks**

Erste Bank<sup>1</sup>, one of Europe's top ten retail banks and the leading retail bank in Central & Eastern Europe, today announced the launch of **Erste-nettrading** (<http://erste-nettrading.com>). Erste-nettrading combines an online brokerage offering access to major stock markets in the US, Europe and Asia, together with a fund supermarket with over 700 mutual funds.

Erste-nettrading is built on **ecetra** ([www.ecetra.com](http://www.ecetra.com)), the eFinance-platform created by ecetra Internet Services AG. Through ecetra, Erste-nettrading also offers information about 50,000 securities in 26 capital markets – both Central European markets and major international markets.

**Erste to attract customers by setting new standards in Austria**

Erste Bank's new services are expected to appeal not only to its existing customers but also to new customers. Erste Bank expects to attract new brokerage business from its existing client base, where around 125,000<sup>2</sup> of the 8 million customers already have conventional brokerage accounts.

**Key facts on Erste-nettrading**

- Trading access to an exceptionally wide range of stock markets – 18 major markets across the US, UK, Europe and Asia
- Superior range of 700 in-house and third party mutual funds, reflecting Erste Bank's philosophy of optimising customer choice
- Information in German and English, including around 10,000 daily news items, 700 company profiles and research reports, helping domestic and international customers to invest on the basis of in-depth information
- For the first time in Austria, a user-friendly, secure 'trading password' system, where each user has an easy-to-remember password instead of long numeric codes
- Pricing is among the cheapest in Austria
- Existing customers can easily convert their existing brokerage account into an online-account within minutes; they do not require a new account, which is usually necessary at other Austrian e-brokers
- Nettrading is a multi-channel product that offers customers the possibility to seek information and trade via the Internet as well as in the bank-branch

**Further details on Erste Bank's new Internet services**

Today's launch is in line with plans announced earlier this year. Initially, the service will target Erste Bank customers, and from next year other Austrian investors. All Erste Bank clients can now access Internet trading services within minutes, without opening a new securities account.

---

<sup>1</sup> Erste Bank der oesterreichischen Sparkassen AG Group

<sup>2</sup> Excluding Slovenská sporiteľňa

With nettrading, **fees** for stock trades will be up to 70% lower than standard offline fees, depending on the size of the trade. Fees for trades in many investment funds will be 50% lower than standard fees. The pricing structure will be reviewed in 2001 as new services are introduced.

The ecetra platform and associated nettrading service will also be made available to **Erste Bank's Austrian savings bank partners**, allowing them to offer a fast, efficient and low-price e-brokerage service. The time-frame for integrating with the systems of any savings bank is only about 8 weeks. All Erste Bank's savings bank partners have decided to use the new platform.

The **target audience** for the current range of brokerage and mutual fund services available through Erste-nettrading is the serious long-term investor and occasional trader who implements up to around 10 trades per year.

#### **Next steps in the eStrategy**

A service geared to day traders and heavy traders is planned for next year. It will utilise the same eFinance platform, ecetra, and will be offered exclusively via Erste Bank's eFinance arm, ecetra Central European eFinance AG.

Also, Erste Bank plans to roll out the new services throughout Central & Eastern Europe, where it aims to make ecetra into the leading internet destination for Investors.

For further information please contact:

*Erste Bank, Investor Relations:*

	Telephone	E-mail
Gabriele Werzer, Head of IR	+ 431 53100 1286	Gabriele.Werzer@erstebank.at
Isabelle Dubos, IR Manager	+ 431 53100 7326	Isabelle.Dubos@erstebank.at

Fax: 0043 (1) 531 00 3112

*ecetra Internet Services AG, Public Relations*

	Telephone	E-mail
Patricia Strampfer, PR Manager	+ 431 53689 7718	patricia.strampfer@ecetra.com

Fax: +43 (1) 53 689 3530  
Neutorgasse 2, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

**Background information on Erste Bank's Internet services**

ecetra Internet Services AG was founded in March 2000 with the aim of creating the leading eFinance platform for the investment community in Emerging (Central & Eastern) Europe, an area with a total population of 380 million people. Erste-nettrading offers access to 2,300 stocks traded on the following markets:

Amsterdam, Netherlands	Madrid, Spain	Prague, Czech Republic
Budapest, Hungary	Milan, Italy	Stockholm, Sweden
Easdaq, Belgium	Moscow, Russia	Sydney, Australia
Frankfurt – Main Market and Neuer Markt, Germany	NYSE, New York, USA	Tokyo, Japan
Helsinki, Finland	NASDAQ, USA	Vienna Austria
London, UK	Paris, France	Zürich, Switzerland

Today's launch of new services follows the successful introduction earlier this year of **Erste-netbanking** (<http://erste-netbanking.com>), which offers mobile and fixed line Internet banking services including account management, payments and funds transfer.

**Background information on Erste Bank**

The Erste Bank Group is one Europe's top ten retail banking groups by number of customers (8 million<sup>3</sup>), the leading retail bank in Central Europe and Austria's second largest bank by total assets (EUR 69.0 billion at 30 September 2000<sup>4</sup>). It is also the largest purely privately owned company listed on the Vienna Stock Exchange.

Erste Bank's home market covers Austria and adjacent Central Europe: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Erste Bank Group's customer focus is on the retail market as well as small to medium-sized enterprises. The Erste Bank Group employs over 30,000 people<sup>5</sup>.

*Strategy of Erste Bank:* Erste Bank has four basic strategic objectives:

- (i) to exploit its core business potential in Austria and focus on its key competencies,
- (ii) to build on its role as the lead bank of the Austrian savings banks sector and to seek increasingly closer cooperation and coordination within the sector, with the sharing of resources and responsibilities, creating synergies for the parties in terms of cost reduction and revenue growth,
- (iii) to establish an extended home market in Central Europe with a potential customer base of some 40 million people and to be the leading retail financial institution in that market, and
- (iv) to offer the premier on-line access to innovative products across its extended home market.

Erste Bank yesterday confirmed the acquisition of Slovenská sporiteľňa, the leading provider of financial services in the Slovak Republic, reinforcing Erste Bank's leadership position in Central European retail banking. This follows the closing in August 2000 of Erste Bank's acquisition of a majority stake in Česká spořitelna, a.s. ("CS"), one of the major players in Czech retail banking.

<sup>3</sup> Rounded pro forma figure including Slovenská sporiteľňa and Erste Bank's savings bank partners

<sup>4</sup> Excludes Slovenská sporiteľňa

<sup>5</sup> Rounded pro forma figure including Slovenská sporiteľňa